

Speech of Reza Pahlavi of Iran
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure for me to be amongst you today, and I am particularly grateful to Summit host Louise Blouin as well as Mr. Andelman and the other organizers of this important panel for allowing me to share some of my views with you.

It is somewhat redundant for me to remind this highly informed and distinguished audience of the importance of the Middle East and of its present volatility, and the threat which this dangerous volatility – if unchecked – poses to international peace and security.

You will all agree that gone are the days when crisis and violence in remote places could remain contained and isolated to their particular localities as we go along with our lives. We live in an interdependent world that has become increasingly interconnected, and I need hardly make this point to an audience here in New York City that we are no longer immune from the consequences of what happens in troubled faraway places.

Today, I wish to focus on the role being played by the clerical regime currently ruling my homeland of Iran, which is without doubt one of the main sources of instability and violence in the region today.

In my view, the dangerous threats posed by the adventurous fundamentalist regime in Tehran have reached new heights in the aftermath of the recent presidential election. Iran's current leadership has lost any semblance of domestic legitimacy and international acceptability. And still, regional adventurism remains the regime's favorite escape route. By deflecting attention from troubles at home to stiffen the spine of their few die-hard fundamentalist supporters, the regime attempts to replace the legitimacy lost at home with the applause of radical Islamists abroad.

Today, most observers will no doubt agree with an assertion that I have been making for a very long time -- that most Iranians wish to change this fundamentalist political system that has robbed them of their rights, individual liberties and above all, their dignity.

The question now is how the will of the majority is to be advanced against the ruthless determination of corrupt authoritarians? How can internal resistance be sustained in a regime that is ready to resort to any means in order to sustain their hated stranglehold over a defenseless population? Today, all Iranians across the political spectrum, both inside and outside the country, are fully motivated and committed to finding ways of emulating the achievements of other democratic movements. Iranians have closely studied the history of other democracies where people have successfully resisted and

finally defeated seemingly invincible dictatorships such as the former Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellite states.

No one expects this to be easy or without risk. Indeed, hard decisions are in store. The blanket suppression by the Islamic leadership has underlined the need for new coordination mechanisms outside and inside Iran and without the constant fear of arrest or harassment. This external and internal coordination advances the struggle of the Iranian people and are necessary catalysts to achieving their ultimate objective of freedom.

It is important for me also to underline the support and understanding which the people of Iran must receive from the international community. Solidarity from world leaders sustains the momentum that is needed in their campaign for the establishment of freedom and democracy at home, and peace and stability in the region.

There should no longer be any doubt that the Khamenei-Ahmadinejad tandem is bent on securing the survival of their bloodstained regime by causing regional mayhem, inventing foreign threats, and then pushing nuclear defense as a requirement of nationalism. Notwithstanding the pros and cons of a policy of engagement as advocated by President Obama, the prospects for any kind of a serious breakthrough in the forthcoming meeting of the '5+1' planned for October 1st seem remote and unrealistic.

To the Iranian leadership, President Obama's offer of direct talks is not seen as a magnanimous gesture by a new and enlightened leadership for the sake of reducing tensions and resolving old disputes. To the clerics, his offer is a tacit acknowledgement of Iran's unchallengeable power. The ruling establishment in Iran sees the opportunity of dialogue with the West as yet another sign of encouragement for consolidating its positions. Expectations on the part of those seeking some form of a compromise regarding key issues such as Iran's nuclear file or its support for terrorist organizations in the Middle East are naïve. Prospects for any kind of a satisfactory resolution of Iran's nuclear activities appear bleak, particularly in the wake of Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election. Having shown the stern face of his government domestically and having accused the West of orchestrating the current turmoil in Iran, it is unrealistic to expect a more conciliatory attitude from his government. Under circumstances that hold little prospect for an acceptable diplomatic compromise, other options appear to be confined to the imposition of more sanctions watered down by Russia and China, or the threat of yet another unwanted and potentially catastrophic conflict in the Middle East.

Experience in the last several years have proven that the West's '*carrot and stick*' approach has simply lacked the kind of leverage that is required for forcing a change of direction in the behavior of the Islamic Republic. However, in view of the recent internal weakening of the political structure in Iran, the imposition of a stricter sanctions regime would fare better if complemented by a robust policy of support for the human rights of the millions of Iranians who have so bravely fought their oppression.

It has always been my view that the regime's *Achilles Heel* is none other than the courageous people of Iran. It is about time that they were awarded the acknowledgement and support which they have deserved from the international community. Heartened by such support, popular pressure will build up to such proportions that even the regime will not be able to dismiss it as a foreign plot. It is only under such a build-up of internal pressure that the Islamic Republic of Iran will be forced to change its policy.

After 30 years of economic decline, social upheaval, human rights violations, and international demonization, one can safely assert that the luster of the Islamic Revolution in Iran has vanished. In its place there is now a window of opportunity for the kind of change we all seek. It is my hope that this opportunity should not be wasted.